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The Role of Sexual Orientation and Gender in the Appreciation of Lesbian Narratives

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- 1 “Appreciation” is one of the factors that has recently been addressed in the study of psychological responses to entertainment. It is defined as a profound perception of meaning or a motivation to create thoughts and feelings aroused by the viewing experience. It is considered a positive evaluation of the consumption of films, motivated because the story teaches something, urges reflection, deeply touches, and is relevant to or has a special meaning for the viewer.¹ Appreciation is also defined as an audience response to entertainment portrayals concerned with the meaning of life and human existence.² It is related to feelings of inspiration, tenderness or awe produced by some films. Those emotions and reflections inspired by personal memories are considered able to serve as an incentive for personal growth and development.³
- 2 Appreciation is affected by the genre of the film, but different genres can prompt it. Drama seems to trigger more reflective thoughts than comedy. A viewer can simultaneously enjoy and appreciate a film, because they are two different kinds of reaction. Appreciation is influenced by the plot, although an audience’s personal characteristics mediate the effect. For example, those who intensely search for meaning in their lives enjoy films that reflect on the search for meaning in one’s life.⁴ However, because of the novelty of appreciation as a subject of study, there is a need for further investigation of this concept and its characteristics.⁵
- 3 This investigation is designed to contribute to the understanding of appreciation as psychological response. It mainly aims to explore audience reception of audiovisual fictional narratives whose main characters are lesbians, and which depict stories set in lesbian communities. The study searches for differences and similarities in appreciation depending on the viewer’s gender and their general sexual orientation (homosexuals or heterosexuals).

- 4 In addition to contributing to knowledge of the recently defined phenomenon of film appreciation, this research seeks to advance comprehension of the factors that affect responses by different audiences to homosexual characters, particularly to lesbians. Even though there is an abundant body of research on the representation of non-normative sexualities, there are insufficient studies on the study of the effects of those representations.⁶ For example, although theoretical research has highlighted the importance of media figures in shaping gay, lesbian and bisexual (GLB) identity, few exploratory empirical studies in this area have provided evidence of the media's influence.⁷ Although investigations of gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender (GLBT) representations, mainly based on *queer theory*, are becoming both *à la mode* and flourishing, interconnections with audience studies remain largely unexplored.⁸
- 5 The lack of reception studies on the topic could be, to some extent, explained by the fact that homosexual characters have not been highly visible onscreen,⁹ though their presence has notably risen in recent years to become prominent in the media.¹⁰ In the United States, for example, such television shows as *Ellen* (ABC Network, 1994–1998), *Will and Grace* (NBC, 1998–2006), *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* (Bravo, 2003–2007), or movies like *Brokeback Mountain* (director: Ang Lee, 2005) and *Angels in America* (director: Mike Nichols, 2003), have sought to reach a wide audience of both homosexuals and heterosexuals.¹¹ Recently, there has been a proliferation of shows in which almost all of the characters are lesbian, such as *The L Word* (Showtime, 2004–2009, 70 episodes), *Venice, The Series* (Open Book Productions, 2009–2012), *The Real L Word* (Showtime Networks, 2010–2012), *Once You Leave* (For Now Productions, 2012) and *Words with Girls* (Nichols and Dimes Entertainment & Heaven Hell Entertainment, 2012). Nevertheless, lesbian characters have appeared in audiovisual productions less frequently than male homosexuals.¹²
- 6 Despite the increasingly diversified and common representation of gays and lesbians in the first decade of the 21st century,¹³ research into the nature of their representation shows that most depictions perpetuate stereotypes of homosexuality.¹⁴ Gays and lesbians are shown to be sexually or romantically unsatisfied, promiscuous or infected with HIV.¹⁵ Other investigations, like Cooper (2003) or Fouts and Inch (2005), have also shown that homosexual characters and homophobia tend to be exploited for humorous effect. Specifically in relation to lesbians, it has been stated that the presentation of a stable lesbian character, who accepts her identity and is satisfied with her romantic relationships and life, improves viewer's attitudes to homosexuality.¹⁶ Furthermore, the representation of lesbians is perceived by some researchers to be a continuation of the stereotyped models by which homosexuality has been depicted from a heterosexual vantage point. In this sense, it is believed that the new representations of lesbians seem to follow the equally stereotypical model of femininity in which the woman is an object of desire.¹⁷ Indeed, modern portrayals of lesbians go beyond the stereotype of masculine, mannish women and the traditional views that pigeonholed them as villainesses or comical characters.¹⁸ Regardless of this, many of these depictions, most of which are stereotyped, have not been wholly satisfactory to the homosexual audience.¹⁹ In general, gay researchers like Butler (1999), Halberstam (2005) or Sedgwick (2008), suggest that contemporary television series that depict homosexual characters reiterate and consolidate heteronormativity, which is defined as the discourse matrix that relies upon fixed notions of biological sex, gender and sexuality, and confers it universality.²⁰

- 7 The increasing number of television shows that feature lesbian lead characters has been related to the favourable shift in attitudes to homosexuals of both sexes that has been identified in some societies.²¹ Demographic, societal changes and education have been considered explanatory factors behind that shift. It has been claimed that better educated people tend to be more accepting of homosexuals, as education exposes individuals to multiple points of view and embraces tolerance, which appears to be influenced by the media.²² Some studies conclude that the consumption of mainstream media has a healthy effect on attitudes to homosexuality.²³ Nevertheless, there have been very few studies of the effects of media use on such attitudes. The existing data has been considered minimal and very little evidence confirms that exposure to media portrayals of gay and lesbian characters is significantly associated with a decrease in prejudice among certain groups of people. For example, Riggle, Ellis and Crawford (1996) found that watching a film about a prominent gay politician produced less prejudiced attitudes. Similarly, Mazur and Emmers-Sommers (2002) found that watching a movie about a non-traditional family with homosexual characters produces greater acceptance of homosexuality. They also found that heterosexual men are less tolerant of homosexuals and hold fewer non-traditional beliefs about the family than women after watching movies that depict both traditional and non-traditional families. Rössler and Brosius (2001) found that adolescents exposed to talk shows featuring discussions of homosexuality express more accepting attitudes to homosexuals. Shiappa, Hewes and Gregg (2006) found that the more often undergraduate students view a television show that depicts homosexuals, the lower their levels of prejudice towards gay men. Shiappa *et al.* (2005) found that increased viewing of gay narratives and higher levels of parasocial interaction with their gay characters correlate with lower levels of sexual prejudice. This was most pronounced for audiences that have little social contact with lesbians and gay men. Finally, Bonds-Raacke *et al.* (2007) found that recalling a positive media portrayal of a homosexual produces a more positive attitude to homosexuals than recalling a negative portrayal. They also found that women have a more positive overall attitude to homosexuals than men.
- 8 In relation to non-heterosexual audiences, it has been claimed that existing representations help gays and lesbians of different ages understand their own sexuality, as Meyer (2003) studies. The media appears to influence the self-realization, coming out and current identities of GLB people by providing role models and inspiration.²⁴ These individuals search for role models who can serve as sources of stimulation to overcome adversity, as Kivel and Kleiver (2000) found. The availability of GLB role models in the media has been considered a positive influence on these sexual identities. Finally, Kivel and Kleiver (2000) have also found that media representations are used in order for young lesbians and gays not only to learn about lesbian and gay identity, but also to find individuals with whom they can relate.
- 9 Regarding lesbian audiences, it has been reported that lesbians use both television and Internet to normalize and affirm their lesbian experience, to reduce negative feelings about their lesbian identity and to reduce social isolation, as Collier, Lumadue and Wooten (2009) found. Dobinson and Young (2000) found that lesbian viewers are active, and their interpretations of popular films are intimately affected by lesbian-specific life experiences and culture competencies. Moreover, it has been shown that lesbian film viewers identify most with lesbian characters who do not conform to traditional female roles and respond positively to actresses who are rumoured to be lesbian. Finally, Soto-

Sanfiel *et al.* (2014) reported that a greater proportion of female and male homosexual audiences, and above all lesbians, identify with the characters and enjoy lesbian narratives more than heterosexuals of both sexes. Identification is considered to be a crucial variable in the comprehension of responses to conventional and interactive media entertainment, as Cohen (2006), Igartua (2010) and Soto-Sanfiel *et al.* (2010) agree, and it is considered a predictor of engagement with the narrative, following Busselle and Bilandzic (2009).

- 10 The dearth of studies on differences and similarities in the reception of homosexual characters by different audiences, together with the novelty of appreciation as a subject of study and the need to examine it in greater depth, inspired us to conduct exploratory research to respond to the following research question:
RQ1: What and where are the differences and similarities in appreciation, if any, depending on the viewer's gender (female vs male), their general sexual orientation (homosexuals vs heterosexuals), and their manifest sexual orientation (lesbians, heterosexual women, gays and heterosexual men)?
- 11 Finding an answer to that research question will help tell us whether storylines, the perception of meaning, the motivation to create thoughts and feelings about the film, the reflections and emotions encouraged by the movie, or the use of a lesbian narrative – stories set within communities of lesbians – as an incentive for personal growth and development, are specifically determined by sexual orientation and gender. We are interested in knowing how these mechanisms operate. The opposite answer, on the other hand, would mean that appreciation is a psychological response that can be prompted in all audiences regardless of those factors. As been shown, preliminary literature suggests that sexual orientation and personal background could be influential factors in the appropriation of homosexual contents in audiovisual narratives. Nevertheless, as stated earlier, there is no known study that has specifically observed the psychological phenomenon of appreciation.
- 12 The results of this research can help to better comprehend the psychological effects of new formats of fiction on certain audiences. They are also valuable for understanding the processes that explain the enjoyment of narratives, a phenomenon of which appreciation is believed to be a key component, as reported by Oliver and Bartsch (2010). Moreover, they can be applied to processes of narrative persuasion or attitude change, as Igartua (2007) studies. The results of this study may also be of interest to the audiovisual industry, as they offer useful information for the creation of more efficient narratives, particularly due to the current fragmentation of audiences. Viewers with non-standard sexual identities actively seek onscreen images of gays and lesbians, i.e. they seek “self-representations”, and, according to Peters (2011), the identification of meaningful factors in their reception of those representations could be valuable to corporations and marketers. Finally, the results of this investigation may improve our understanding of the perception of homosexuality in society via the identification of the aspects that define the reception of its media representation.
- 13 Before moving on to the research method, we must make it clear that the absence of closely related literature led us to adopt an exploratory research approach. Braun (2006) states that such a strategy tends to tackle new problems on which little or no previous research has been produced, as in this case. Following Sandhursen (2000), exploratory research provides a range of causes or options to explain a specific problem, forming the basis for later and more conclusive research, as Singh (2007)

asserts. Therefore, exploratory research does not offer final and definitive solutions to the problem but helps further our comprehension of its nature. It is suitable for gaining familiarity with a phenomenon or acquiring new insights into a scientific problem where, as in this case, the available literature is too general.

- 14 The exploratory nature of the research does not imply any lack of methodological rigour. In fact, we agree with Nargundkar (2008) that this kind of research must be designed as methodically as possible, as it is the basis for later studies. Therefore, in accordance with the aforesaid reasons, and due to the possibilities of prejudice playing a major role in evaluating the effects of narratives and also their characters, we decided to follow a mixed-methods approach. This research consists of a quantitative study and a qualitative study, both independent from each other but integrated in the results phase. The adequacy of this methodological approach for cases like ours is justified in the following section, in the description of the essential characteristics of mixed methods. Another of the objectives of this research is to observe the applicability of a mixed-methods approach to exploratory research.

Method

- 15 In this exploratory study, following González Castro, Kellison, Boyd and Kopak (2010), qualitative and quantitative methods are used in a complementary, concurrent fashion. There is a great deal of literature on the epistemological difference between those approaches, and much of it considers them incompatible.²⁵ However, some researchers, such as Cresswell *et al.* (2007) or Johnson *et al.* (2007), defend the advantages of their combined use. Our design focuses on getting the quantitative study to reveal the general trends and the qualitative study to elaborate, highlight, illustrate and clarify the results of the former. More specifically, the qualitative study examines the participants and their experience of viewing fiction with lesbian plots and characters in a holistic manner that is integrated into their natural environment. It generates detailed information on the emotions, thoughts and behaviours examined within the original context of the observations, as Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest. It also reveals the semantic and ideological field linked to the reception of lesbian narratives. Furthermore, it enables identification of the complexity of the phenomenon, along with the experiences and factors involved in a way that measurement scales or multivariate models typical of a quantitative study would have been unable to capture, as Plano *et al.* (2008) advise. However, the information from the qualitative study does not enable us to confidently establish ties or associations between concepts and cases, even though, following Denzin and Lincoln (1994), we chose to work with a much larger sample than usual to ensure a variety of nuances. This is why the quantitative study was conceived. It measures the constructs that are used to guide the observations in the first study and inquires about their properties. The quantitative study thus examines the strength and association of the variables as they have been defined by the preceding theory. It is also useful for making group comparisons.
- 16 In this investigation, we have striven to ensure that the results of both methods are explicitly related and that their contribution to the joint understanding of the subject is greater than what each part provides in isolation, as Wooley (2009) suggests. We shall present a flexible analysis in which the quantitative and qualitative studies are

presented separately, yet their results are integrated when explaining the phenomenon, following González Castro *et al.* (2010).

Common Stimuli

- 17 It was agreed that the narratives that would serve as a stimulus for the participants would be the same for both studies. We retrieved images and plots from the series *The L Word*, which was broadcast for six seasons in the USA (2004–2009, Showtime) and for just one season in Spain (2007, Canal+). *The L Word* was one of the first narrative depictions with major lesbian characters. The homosexual women in *The L Word* lead complex, exciting lives, are upper-middle class and experience sex freely and aesthetically. The impact and novelty of the show have prompted researchers to reflect on differing sensibilities.²⁶
- 18 The series was chosen because it offers up to 70 episodes from which we could create/select the right stimuli; it has a variety of homosexual female characters who deal with a variety of issues. The main characters are mainly homosexual women who worked in socially recognised, high-status professional jobs, including deans, television producers, journalists, tennis players, stylists, writers and teachers. Given that the episodes as a whole placed these women in all sorts of situations, this show was considered potentially well suited to observing perceptions of lesbians. We also considered the fact that the complete series had been dubbed into Spanish, so it could easily be used in this study. We should make it clear that despite all of this, the objective was not to observe the viewers' reactions to *The L Word* but to use its contents to explore the broader phenomenon of the effects of how depictions of lesbians are received, and particularly how they are appreciated. We therefore chose two stories that would lead to the extraction of reliable general conclusions that were not dependent on or attributable to the particular story.
- 19 What we were seeking when selecting scenes were coherent narratives with exposition, climax and denouement and which maintained dramatic tension, while also presenting a subject that could provoke intense emotional opinions and reactions. Seven stories were constructed on paper after completely viewing and vetting all the episodes. The narrations were then edited to form films lasting approximately 15 minutes each. The two films used in this study were chosen by external judges who evaluated the following aspects: property of the audiovisual language, pace, dramatic tension, comprehension of the story, clarity of the exposition and capacity to arouse emotional or cognitive reactions. In our final selection, we also considered that one of the stories had a happy ending while the other did not. The reference literature, as in Vorderer *et al.* (2004), states that content, and especially denouement, influences the audience's enjoyment of audiovisual narratives. Furthermore, one of the claims made by homosexual audiences is that films that address homosexuality usually have a sad ending; the homosexual character dies, is murdered, kills him/herself or has to separate from his/her partner due to social and family pressure, as Palencia (2011) suggests.
- 20 The content of the first story (14:58 min.), *Soldier*, is as follows. Tasha, a captain in the US army, is accused of homosexual behaviour and may be expelled. Captain Beach, who is appointed to defend her, reads the accusations against Tasha, who denies only one of the charges: having promoted another female soldier because she was interested in her.

Tasha attests that she promoted the soldier because she deserved the post, and argues with Captain Beach because the army had gone to her friend Alice's home to interrogate her. Captain Beach is convinced that Tasha does not deserve to be expelled and prepares an effective defence. The trial begins and the prosecutor is a colonel who also appears to be a lesbian. When she interrogates Alice, the latter suggests that the colonel might be homosexual. The colonel then fears for her reputation and during a break in the trial offers Alice an agreement to save Tasha. However, Tasha decides to tell the truth: she loves Alice and is homosexual. Tasha ends up being expelled from the army, although she justifies herself by saying that she had been true to herself, to her values and to her love.

- 21 The content of the second story, *Seduction* (14:39 min.), involves Jenny going to live in a new neighbourhood of Los Angeles with her boyfriend, Tim, where they meet their lesbian neighbours. Curiosity and doubts regarding her own sexual orientation overcome Jenny after spying on her neighbours' love games. Jenny tells her boyfriend what she has seen and the story rekindles their mutual passion. Jenny then befriends her neighbours, goes to a party where most of the guests are lesbians and one of them, Marina, seduces her. Meanwhile, her boyfriend, unaware of this situation, asks Jenny to marry him. Tim gets ready to travel for a swimming competition when he realizes that he has left his lucky timer at home. When he gets home, he discovers Jenny engaged in sex with Marina. Marina leaves and Tim throws away the book manuscript that Jenny was writing and leaves too. Jenny stays at home, in tears.
- 22 Both stories were copied onto a DVD for the qualitative study and were also used in the quantitative study, with the addition of an online application consisting of an introduction to the study with instructions and a questionnaire for data collection. Further details about the procedure are provided below. Both studies were conducted in parallel. Because our model states that the qualitative study expands on the results of the quantitative one, we present the latter first.

Quantitative Study

Participants

- 23 314 subjects (195 men and 119 women) of differing sexual orientations (heterosexuals and homosexuals) and ages were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions (Table 1). All the participants collaborated voluntarily with the experiment. The only selection criteria were for them to live in Spain and be over the age of 18.

Table 1. Sample distribution by manifest sexual orientation, gender and age										
				Age						Total
				Up to 18	19–29	30–40	41–51	52–62	Over 63	
MSO	F	Ht	T	1	67	43	37	15	3	166
			% MSO	.6	40.4	25.9	22.3	9	1.8	–
			% Age	16.7	62.6	56.6	51.4	36.6	25	52.9

			% Total	.3	21.3	13.7	11.8	4.8	1	52.9
		Hm	T	3	11	4	11	0	0	29
			% MSO	10.3	37.9	13.8	37.9	0	0	–
			% Age	50	10.3	5.3	15.3	0	0	9.2
			% Total	1	3.5	1.3	3.5	0	0	9.2
	M	Ht	T	1	20	20	13	16	6	76
			% MSO	1.3	26.3	26.3	17.1	21.1	7.9	–
			% Age	16.7	18.7	26.3	18.1	39	50	24.2
			% Total	.3	6.4	6.4	4.1	5.1	1.9	24.2
		Hm	T	1	9	9	11	10	3	43
			% MSO	2.3	20.9	20.9	25.6	23.3	7	–
			% Age	16.7	8.4	11.8	15.3	24.4	25	13.7
			% Total	.3	2.9	2.9	3.5	3.2	1	13.7
		Total	T	6	107	76	72	41	12	314
	% MSO		1.9	34.1	24.2	22.9	13.1	3.8	–	
	% Age		–	–	–	–	–	1	–	
	% Total		1.9	34.1	24.2	22.9	13.1	3.8	–	

MSO = manifest sexual orientation, F = female, M = male, Ht = heterosexual, HM = homosexual, T = tally, % MSO = percentage within the MSO, % Age = percentage within the age, % Total = percentage within the total.

- 24 The subjects were informed that they would participate in a study of audiovisual reception. The call for participation was mainly sent out via Facebook. However, we also enlisted the help of related associations to gain access to homosexual men and women.²⁷ A public call was made by sending an email to its distribution list.

Procedure

- 25 A quasi-experimental study was conducted with a factorial design of 2 x 2 x 2, with the independent variables being the story (soldier vs seduction), gender (female vs male) and sexual orientation (heterosexual vs homosexual).
- 26 Two online applications were created that contained the introduction to the experiment along with the instructions, one of the two films and a (post-test) questionnaire that had to be filled in after viewing the film. The films were the same as

those screened in the qualitative study. Participants were randomly assigned one of the two applications: 214 watched the film *Soldier* and 100 watched *Seduction*.

- 27 In the call for cooperation, the participants were asked to access the experiment online. Before they began, they were also asked to ensure that they would be totally alone during the experiment so that the viewing would be individual and comfortable, and they were asked to turn off any devices that might distract them. They were told that the viewing and questionnaire had to be completed in one uninterrupted session, and that the experiment would last a total of 25 minutes.
- 28 The applications were linked to an online Excel database which automatically gathered all participants' responses. Once the data had been collected, the file was converted into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) format to perform statistical analysis.

Materials

- 29 **Dependent variables.** *Appreciation* was measured through five items inspired by Oliver and Bartsch (2011, 2010): "This story taught me something"; "This story has prompted me to reflect"; "This story touched me deeply"; "This story is relevant to me"; and "This story has a deep meaning for me". The items were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = totally disagree / 5 = totally agree). The five items were subjected to a factorial analysis with varimax rotation and the main components extraction method. From this process, a very high correlation was noted between items 4 and 5 ($r = .86$), which indicated that both measured the same concept. After eliminating item 5, we confirmed the existence of a single factor that as a whole explained 70.72% of the variance. The Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin index ($KMO = .738$) and the Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2 = 634.38$, $gl = 6$) were significant ($p < .001$). We then examined the reliability of the scale, which was highly satisfactory ($\alpha = .86$, $M = 11.73$, $SD = 3.73$). A variable called *appreciation* was created, made up of the sum of the partial scores for each of the five items.
- 30 **Control variables.** All of these options were answered using a multiple-choice questionnaire: gender (female/male), general sexual orientation (homosexual/heterosexual), age ("up to 18 years old", "between 19 and 29", "between 30 and 40", "between 41 and 51", "between 52 and 62", "older than 63"), and education level ("primary/elementary education", "secondary education", "technical-vocational training", "second cycle or bachelor's degree", and "third cycle: post-graduate, master's or doctorate").
- 31 We created a variable called *manifest sexual orientation*, which was the outcome of the relationship between gender and sexual orientation. Its categories were as follows: heterosexual woman; homosexual woman; heterosexual man; and homosexual man.

Analysis of Results

- 32 We explored the effect of the independent variable (story) and the control variables (age, gender, sexual orientation and education level) on appreciation. The *t-Student* test revealed that there were statistical differences in appreciation depending on the narrative ($F = .001$, $t = 4.053$, $gl = 312$, $p < .001$). *Soldier* prompted more appreciation ($M = 7.73$, $SD = 2.26$, $N = 214$) than *Seduction* ($M = 6.66$, $SD = 2.14$, $N = 100$). Furthermore, there

were statistical differences in appreciation depending on the participant's general sexual orientation ($F = .003$, $t = -2.09$, $gl = 115.4$, $p = .038$). Homosexuals expressed greater appreciation ($M = 7.88$, $DS = 2.28$, $N = 72$) than heterosexuals ($M = 7.24$, $SD = 2.26$, $N = 242$). There were no differences in appreciation depending on the participants' gender ($F = 6.115$, $p < .014$, $t = 1.800$, $gl = 217.44$, $p = .073$). Thus, we determined that the participant's gender in itself did not affect appreciation.

- 33 We conducted a variance analysis (ANOVA) to explore the effect of education level and manifest sexual orientation on appreciation. Regarding education level, the test showed that there were no statistical differences between the groups ($F = 1.315$, $p = .264$). Thus, education level does not affect appreciation. In the case of manifest sexual orientation, Welch's F-test showed statistical differences between the groups ($F = 3.339$, $p = .023$). Contrast tests revealed the existence of differences between female homosexuals and male heterosexuals ($F = 3.339$, $p = .023$). Female homosexuals attributed greater appreciation ($M = 8.13$, $SD = 2.05$) than male heterosexuals ($M = 6.72$, $SD = 2.50$).
- 34 We then checked the relationship between the story, general sexual orientation and manifest sexual orientation. To do this, we observed the reactions to the stories separately. First we observed *Soldier*. The *t-Student* test showed that there were no statistical differences in appreciation depending on general sexual orientation. Both homosexuals and heterosexuals showed similar levels of appreciation of this film. We then observed manifest sexual orientation using the ANOVA models. Tukey's HSD test demonstrated that there were statistical differences in the appreciation of *Soldier* expressed by female heterosexuals and male heterosexuals ($p = 0.003$) and between female homosexuals and female heterosexuals ($p = .019$). Female heterosexuals attributed greater appreciation ($M = 8.06$, $SD = 1.78$) than male heterosexuals ($M = 6.75$, $SD = 2.65$). Likewise, female homosexuals ($M = 8.39$, $SD = 2.21$) attributed greater appreciation than male heterosexuals. Once these calculations were complete, we examined the film *Seduction*. Our analysis revealed that there are no statistical differences in appreciation depending on general sexual orientation ($F = 2.866$, $p = .094$), nor were there differences in appreciation of this story depending on manifest sexual orientation ($F = .365$, $p = .778$).

Qualitative Study

Sample

- 35 The second part of the study involved monitoring four groups of participants: 20 heterosexual women ($M = 34.93$ years / $Rg = 24-68$ years); 20 lesbians ($M = 34.5$ years / $Rg = 26-52$ years) 20 heterosexual men ($M = 36.64$ years / $Rg = 21$ vs 63 years); and 20 gay men ($M = 35.40$ years / $Rg = 26-52$ years). From each audience group, the responses of only 16 randomly chosen individuals were analysed because the emerging responses and reflections became saturated at this number and no new thematic strands appeared.
- 36 The criteria for being part of the sample were that all the participants had to be manifest homosexuals or heterosexuals, live in Spain, understand Spanish (the language of the stories and the interviews), speak Spanish fluently, and be over the age of 18 (the films in the study contained explicit sex scenes).

Data Collection

- 37 Data was collected through semi-structured interviews using a guide. The interviews were conducted by the authors of this text (two heterosexual females and one lesbian), and one extra male homosexual interviewer, who cooperated with the research. All of them interviewed similar proportions of individuals pertaining to all groups.
- 38 Appreciation was explored via three questions: “Did this story teach you anything?”; “Did this story prompt you to reach any conclusion, reflection or lesson?”; and “Is this story at all relevant to your life?” The interviews were audio-recorded for posterior transcription. Participants were also asked, in an open manner, how much they liked of the story, their general opinion about it and their enjoyment during consumption.
- 39 The interviews were conducted in the participants’ homes. We made sure that the stories had been watched individually, comfortably, without interruptions, in the place and with the usual means used to watch films (DVD player + television or computer). At the start of the interview, the researcher asked the participants about their sexual orientation to verify that the subject fit the sample. They then explained the conditions of the empirical experience in which they were about to participate, before leaving the house in order for the participant to watch the first film alone. After watching it, the participant called the interviewer, who, after returning, conducted the interview about the story watched. Once finished, the interviewer followed the exact same procedure for the consumption of the second movie. Once everything was set up, the participant watched the second story, and the interviewer left the home and later returned to conduct the second interview. Half of the group of participants watched *Soldier* first and *Seduction* second, while the other half watched the films in the reverse order.

Analysis of Results

- 40 Results were obtained by performing a thematic analysis and following the recommended standard procedure suggested by Boyatzis (1998) and by Braun and Clarke (2006). In the transcriptions, the answers were organised into the following categories: utterances, paragraphs, words or groups of text, according to Sierra Bravo (1999) and Krippendorff (1990). After this, emerging themes from the joint analysis of the categories were detected, which were grouped together in the order in which they emerged in each group of participants. Later, we compared the differences and similarities in themes between the groups depending on gender (males/females) and general sexual orientation (homosexuals/heterosexuals). The process was repeated identically for each narrative. Finally, we identified the most important aspects by comparing and contrasting the emerging themes, and their frequency in appreciation in each of the stories.
- 41 We now present the strands of reflection and their comparison between groups for each narrative.
- 42 ***Soldier***. We detected the emergence of nine overarching themes or strands of reflection that induced appreciation:
- 43 1) the coherence and honesty of the main character;
- 44 2) the valour of her fighting for what she loves;

- 45 3) the inspiration of tolerance of homosexuality;
 46 4) reflection on the exercise of freedom;
 47 5) the need to change mindsets and institutions;
 48 6) the struggle for social change to prevent discrimination against homosexuals;
 49 7) the injustice of discrimination against homosexuals;
 50 8) the romantic facet of the story and love as the highest value; and
 51 9) decision-making as a positive value.
 52 Some of these themes were repeated among the four groups, although their frequency varied. Others emerged in only one or two groups of subjects depending on their gender or sexual orientation. The comparison between the presence and absence of these strands of reflection between all groups, together with the frequency for each subject, is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Thematic strands indicating appreciation of <i>Soldier</i> and its relevance according to their frequency among groups				
Frequency	Heterosexual men	Gays	Heterosexual women	Lesbians
1	Valour to fight for what you love	Coherence and honesty of the main character	Coherence and honesty of the main character	Coherence and honesty of the main character
2	Inspiration of tolerance for homosexuality	Learning to defend oneself	Valour to fight for what you love	Reflection on the exercise of freedom
3	Need to change mindsets and institutions	Valour to fight for what you love	Inspiration of tolerance for homosexuality	Injustice of discrimination against homosexuals
4	–	Fight for social change	Romantic facet of the story	Fight for social change
5	–	Decision-making as a positive value	–	Romantic facet of the story
6	–	–	–	Decision-making as a positive value
7	–	–	–	Greater workplace discrimination against lesbians than gays
Relevance	Unanimously not relevant	Relevant to half	Barely relevant to their lives	Relevant to the life of more than half

Other	Residually no explicit appreciation of the story	-	-	-
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53 **Seduction.** Ten strands of reflection emerged that indicate appreciation:

54 1) being honest with oneself;

55 2) rejection of deception;

56 3) fear of infidelity;

57 4) respect for following one's own desires;

58 5) evocation of the discovery of one's own homosexuality;

59 6) the possibility of falling in love with anyone regardless of their gender;

60 7) the difficulties of faithfulness;

61 8) tolerance of homosexuality;

62 9) reflection on human vulnerability, and;

63 10) depiction of non-stereotypical lesbian characters.

64 Some of these themes were repeated among all four groups, although their frequency varied. Others only emerged in one, two or three groups of subjects, depending on their gender or sexual orientation (Table 3).

Table 3. Thematic strands indicating appreciation of *Seduction*, its relevance and their frequency among groups

Frequency	Heterosexual men	Gays	Heterosexual women	Lesbians
1	Fear of infidelity	Need to eliminate prejudices and stereotypes regarding lesbians	Being honest with oneself; the main character's coherence when discovering her sexual identity	Admiration of the main character for following her own desire
2	Rejection of unfaithfulness to the boyfriend. Identification with the betrayed boyfriend	Being honest with oneself	Admiration of the main character for following her own desire	Being honest with oneself
3	Being honest with oneself	Rejection of unfaithfulness to the boyfriend	Tolerance of homosexuality	Evocation of the discovery of their own homosexuality

4	Importance of cultivating the couple relationship as a way of avoiding infidelity	Possibility of falling in love with anyone regardless of their gender	Rejection of unfaithfulness to the boyfriend	Possibility of falling in love with anyone regardless of their gender
5	Difficulty of faithfulness	Appreciation of non-stereotyped lesbian characters	Reflection on human vulnerability	Rejection of unfaithfulness to the boyfriend
6	–	Difficulty of faithfulness	–	Appreciation of non-stereotyped lesbian characters
Relevance	Unanimously irrelevant to their lives	Mostly not relevant to their lives. Relevant to a minority because it evokes the discovery of their own homosexuality	Mostly not relevant to their lives. Marginally: reaffirms their beliefs about honesty	Relevant to the lives of more than half
Others (residual)	Lack of appreciation of the trivialisation of sex	No appreciation or lessons learned: explains nothing new, a film to earn commercial profits	Rejection of homosexual sex nuanced by tolerance of homosexuality	–

Integrated Analysis

- 65 The quantitative study revealed that appreciation is different depending on the story. *Soldier* prompted more appreciation than *Seduction*. This is in line with Hofer's suggestion (2013) that narrative plot influences appreciation.
- 66 The qualitative analysis explained how, among all participants, the appreciation derived from *Soldier* is clearer, more widespread and unequivocal than the appreciation derived from *Seduction*. The latter is a disturbing story that evokes a wider and more controversial variety of reflections among the participants. We shall now elaborate further upon this.
- 67 Jenny from *Seduction* is ambiguous, while Tasha from *Soldier* is the classic heroine with no ambiguity. The virtues that the latter embodies (the valour to fight for what she loves, coherence and honesty) and how the plot inspires tolerance of homosexuality emerge as topics of reflection shared by all the participants across the board. Jenny is also valued for being honest with herself and for pursuing her sexual desire, but these reasons for appreciation are overshadowed by all of the participants' rejection of her cheating on her boyfriend. *Seduction* also inspires tolerance of homosexuality, but in a less consistent way among all the groups of participants. The motives for appreciation are more varied depending on the participant's gender and sexual orientation. In a broad sense, all of this is similar to Hofer (2013) in that the plot of the narrative influences appreciation, although personal characteristics could mediate the effect.

- 68 Likewise, the quantitative study also showed that there are statistical differences in appreciation depending on the participants' general sexual orientation. Homosexuals expressed greater appreciation than heterosexuals. The qualitative study explained that this is primarily due to the personal relevance of both stories, which is always greater for homosexuals than for heterosexuals. In fact, the differences in appreciation between the subjects are strongly determined by their autobiographical memory, given that the reasons for appreciation are related to this factor. This is strongly related to what Larsen and László (2006) found for reading literature, when they described how personal relevance and negative or positive emotions of evoked memories were important determinants for evaluating and appreciating a story. However, they also concluded that there were different patterns for that in the different cultural groups they examined. Cultural groups moderated the evaluation and appreciation of the story.
- 69 Going back to our research, the quantitative analysis revealed that there are no differences in appreciation depending on the participant's gender. Considering both the quantitative and the qualitative studies, this information can be interpreted as follows: men and women can express appreciation for these stories in similar proportions and intensities. In fact, the participant's gender does not interfere with the existence and magnitude of appreciation. Nevertheless, there are nuances to this statement, related to gender and dependant on the story, that are revealed by the qualitative study. For example, the romantic side of the story prompts appreciation only in women, albeit residually, in *Soldier*. In *Seduction*, discourses also emerge from men about infidelity and the fear of being cheated on, while women, in turn, concur in valuing the main character's quest for sexual desire. Thus, gender does influence the motives for appreciation. The complementary use of the qualitative and quantitative studies made it possible to obtain this nuance.
- 70 In the case of manifest sexual orientation, the contrast tests in the quantitative study revealed the existence of differences in appreciation between female and male homosexuals, regardless of the story. Lesbians attribute greater appreciation than male homosexuals. The qualitative study revealed the existence of different motivations for appreciation among heterosexual men and lesbians. The main difference between both groups is that more topics of reflection that define appreciation for both stories emerge among lesbians (lesbians' discourse is always richer) than among heterosexual men. Among the latter, however, an idea emerges that is exclusive to this group: a lack of appreciation of the stories due to male chauvinism (women should not be in the army), a rejection of the American army where *Soldier* is set, or the trivialisation of sex, which they claim is shown in *Seduction*. This set of motivations for explaining lack of appreciation of the stories was used only by heterosexual men. Another difference between heterosexual men and lesbians is related to explicit relevance: the men unanimously claim that neither story is relevant at all, while more than half of the lesbians claim that both stories are relevant. Despite the scarcity of evidence related to differences in perception of narratives by different sexual orientations, this is somehow related to what Mazur and Emmers-Sommer (2002) found when suggesting that heterosexual men were less tolerant of homosexuals represented in movies than women. In our case, although tolerance is not discussed, both studies, when compared, offer data indicating that heterosexual men react differently from other audience

groups to movies that portray homosexual characters. Their negative or neutral responses are more drastic than those of homosexual men and women.

- 71 We later quantitatively observed the relationship between manifest sexual orientation depending on the story. To begin with, differences were found in *Soldier* between female and male heterosexuals. The qualitative study demonstrated that these differences can be explained by the emergence among heterosexual men of some cases of a lack of appreciation of the story, as opposed to residual appreciation of its romantic side among female heterosexuals.
- 72 Also, in *Soldier*, statistical differences were found between lesbians and heterosexual women, which can be explained because the story is not relevant to most heterosexuals, while it is to most lesbians. These differences are also justified by the appearance of a theme that is exclusive to lesbian appreciation: reflection on the exercise of freedom and the injustice of discrimination because of sexual orientation.
- 73 Next we examined *Seduction*. The quantitative analyses showed that there were no differences in appreciation depending on manifest sexual orientation. The qualitative study revealed that there are two strands of convergence for shared appreciation among all groups: admiration of the main character's honesty with herself and rejection of her unfaithfulness to her boyfriend. However, a closer look at this information reveals converging reasons among participants depending on their gender and sexual orientation. Depending on gender, we found more exculpatory discourses of the infidelity among women, while among the men the reflections revolved around infidelity and the fear of being cheated on. Only the women valued the main character's quest to satisfy her sexual desire. On the other hand, homosexuals tended to reflect on the possibility of falling in love with anyone regardless of their gender and value the depiction of non-stereotyped lesbian characters and the evocation of the discovery of their own homosexuality that the story inspired in them. Nevertheless, the qualitative study also revealed the emergence of more reasons to appreciate *Seduction* among lesbians than in the other groups. It also revealed that, in response to the question of whether this story was relevant to their lives, most of both heterosexual women and gays said it was not, heterosexual men unanimously said it was not, while more than half of the lesbians claimed that the story was relevant to them.
- 74 Regarding the remaining variables observed in this investigation, the quantitative study confirmed the relationship between them and appreciation. So there is a positive correlation between appreciation and the following variables (in order of magnitude): presence, identification, satisfaction, intensity of emotions, realism of the characters, aesthetic quality, realism of the story, and finally intensity of sensations. However, the subsequent regression analysis demonstrated that the magnitude (or intensity) of appreciation was predicted only by presence, emotional intensity and identification with the characters. This confirms that the important factor when predicting the magnitude of appreciation is the activity of the single, individual subject with regard to the story. These variables also emerged in the qualitative study.

Discussion

- 75 One of the main contributions of the present exploratory investigation is that it analyses the reception of the audiovisual representation of lesbians, not only from the female vantage point but also from heterogeneous vantage points in terms of gender

and sexual orientation. As stated earlier, very few studies have compared the responses of heterosexual and homosexual audiences of both sexes to narratives, so this research furthers our knowledge of the psychological effect that these narratives may have on audiences with different manifest sexual orientations.

- 76 Another contribution of our exploratory study is that it performs a detailed observation and therefore makes headway in describing the phenomenon of appreciation, from which it offers properties, as researchers such as Oliver and Hartmann (2011) have called for. This study observes that appreciation is not only linked to the genre of drama, according to Oliver and Bartsch (2010), but is also influenced by the very content of the drama, as in Hofer (2013), that is by the features of the characters and particularly by the virtues that the receiver distinguishes in them. All of this is in line with Oliver and Bartsch (2011) when they suggest that appreciation is a response linked to the meaning of the representation viewed from the standpoint of human virtue that leads audiences to ponder questions related to their own life purposes. However, this investigation adds that appreciation is linked to human virtue regardless of gender, sexual orientation and even prejudices. In fact, it notes that appreciation transcends the audiovisual depiction itself (the perceived quality of the staging and characters). This is probably this study's main general observation. In this sense, we feel it adds relevant information to the scarce studies that have furthered the definition of the appreciation of narrative properties, such as Hofer (2013), Oliver and Bartsch (2011) and Oliver and Hartmann (2011), because it contributes to the understanding of the perception by different audiences of homosexuality represented in media, and to homosexuality itself. Given that, generally speaking, audiences of all sexual orientation and genres manifest appreciation after the reception of lesbian narratives, it can be presumed that the presence of these stories in the media will help reduce prejudices among different groups of people and achieve greater acceptance of homosexuality in society, as has been suggested by preliminary studies such as Levina *et al.* (2000), Mazur and Emmers-Sommer (2002), Riggles, Ellis and Crawford (1996), Rössler and Brosius (2001) and Schiappa *et al.* (2006). Also, the presence of these stories in the media will help homosexuals to define their sexual identities and construct healthy interpersonal relations with all individuals, by providing models to compare themselves with, as Gomillion and Giulian (2010) and Kivel and Kleiver (2000) suggest. According to Igartua (2007), appreciation, therefore, appears to be a mediator of narrative persuasion, as it is enjoyment.
- 77 Likewise, this study shows that viewers' moral convictions are a crucial factor in their appreciation of audiovisual narratives, either because of the morality of the main characters or because of how the characters resolve their conflicts. Stories about morally unimpeachable characters not only trigger higher magnitudes of appreciation but also more shared reasons or explanations among the receivers than stories about characters whose actions are morally ambivalent, regardless of the gender and sexual orientation of the viewer. This is in line with what the literature on morality and entertainment has traditionally defended: audiences act as moral monitors of the characters, and the moral judgement of the actions of the characters and the story are relevant factors for the enjoyment of narratives. In particular, this research adds that morality not only affects enjoyment of narratives, but also their appreciation.²⁸
- 78 Despite all this, this study reveals that although appreciation through the valuing of the characters' moral virtues can be found in all audiences, the motivations for

appreciation are specific to each group. Future studies should make an in-depth study of the relationship between identification and empathy with the characters, autobiographical memories and appreciation through the perceived virtues of the characters. Given that in this study the open (inconclusive) ending of one of the analysed stories (which leaves room for the viewer's imagination), dovetails with the story whose content is morally ambivalent, we suggest that future studies should perform a specific, controlled observation of the relationship between the psychological responses of audiences and the structure of the narration, happy or sad endings, the viewers' moral convictions and the characters' ethical decisions when faced with conflict. However, these results must be observed in the light of some preliminary evidence that indicates that recalling a positive gay or lesbian media portrayal later encourages a more positive attitude to homosexuals than recalling a negative portrayal. It indicates the importance of positive role models in entertainment media as potential instructors of social attitudes, as Bonds-Raacke *et al.* (2007) suggest.

- 79 On the other hand, this study provides proof that general sexual orientation does influence the overall magnitudes of appreciation of lesbian narratives. Homosexuals are more apt than heterosexuals to appreciate audiovisual works that depict lesbian characters. The qualitative study revealed that personal relevance (via autobiographical memory) justified these differences. Thus, the degree and nature of the relevance of the audiovisual story for the individual is important when attributing appreciation, as has been identified for literature as in Larsen and László (2006).
- 80 Regarding gender, the quantitative test revealed that gender itself does not affect the magnitude of appreciation: men and women may both express appreciation of these stories in similar proportions and intensities. However, the qualitative study revealed the existence of nuances of appreciation according to gender and depending on the story, i.e. the groups showed different reasons for appreciation depending on their gender. We can therefore suggest that gender does influence the motives or reasons for appreciation. Identifying this is another key contribution of this study that was possible due to the mixed-methods approach. It shows that magnitudes in responses conceal different patterns of psychological relations between different audiences and narratives. So, for the purposes of more in-depth scientific observation of psychological responses, we suggest use of this combination of methods.
- 81 Having reached this point, we should consider the fact that this study was performed in Spain, which in 2005 allowed same-sex marriage²⁹ and where the penal code states that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is a crime.³⁰ Spain has also been recently identified as the world's most tolerant country of homosexuality.³¹ As has been stated, demographic factors, such as age, ethnicity, gender and culture, help to explain attitudes to homosexuality, as different authors like Baunach (2012), Loftus (2001) or Detenber *et al.* (2013) have studied. Larsen and László (2006) found that not only the personal experience but also the historical and cultural background of individuals affects appreciation. All of this could help explain why in all the subject groups in this study, tolerance of homosexuality emerged as a relevant factor in appreciation. Future studies should validate these observations through empirical tests performed in different cultural settings.
- 82 Furthermore, the quantitative study showed that there are statistical differences in the appreciation of stories about lesbians depending on general sexual orientation. Homosexuals showed greater appreciation than heterosexuals. The qualitative study

revealed that this mainly stems from the personal relevance of both stories, which was always higher for homosexuals than for heterosexuals. The aforesaid reasons refer to autobiographical memory. Therefore, the differences in appreciation among the subjects are heavily determined by this factor. The importance of autobiographical memories in responses to the media has been highlighted previously, as Harris, Bonds-Raacke and Cady (2005) summarize. Besides, Bonds-Raacke *et al.* (2007) suggest that autobiographical memories have even been claimed to be important in the context of recalling negative or positive portrayals of homosexual performers in the media. However, researchers have traditionally focused on determining the impact of preliminary experience with somehow related contents in successive consumptions. This research adds that what is shown in the media activates a combination of preliminary experienced cognitions, emotions and behaviours in individuals, during and after consumption. This set of personal memories helps receivers to comprehend and appreciate what is being represented. Individuals of all sexual orientations use their particular life experiences in a pragmatic and oriented manner in order to understand homosexual and heterosexual characters and their actions, and thus find meanings or extract lessons from the depiction.

- 83 Additionally, the quantitative study revealed that there are differences in appreciation between lesbians and male heterosexuals (regardless of the story). Lesbians showed greater overall magnitudes of appreciation than male heterosexuals. In turn, the qualitative study showed different reasons between these two groups for appreciating both stories. The main difference is that more subjects of reflection emerge among lesbians, who define appreciation through their own stories, leading their discourse to be richer. Moreover, the qualitative study revealed that of all the groups, only the heterosexual men (residually) find no appreciation. The other major difference between heterosexual men and lesbians is that the stories are unanimously irrelevant to the former while they are relevant to over half of the lesbians. In fact, the latter appreciate the story because of their identification and empathy with the character, her gender and sexual orientation.
- 84 Similarly, the qualitative study revealed that gender identification with lesbian characters and motivations for appreciation shared with lesbians can be found in heterosexual women. Gays expressed appreciation through elements of autobiographical memory, which is related to their identification with homosexuality. In contrast, heterosexual men neither identified with gender nor sexual orientation, hence their unanimous expression of the irrelevance of the stories (and, residually, their lack of appreciation). This is coherent with studies which state that men are less accepting of homosexuality than women, as in Mahalik *et al.* (2005), and that women have a more positive overall attitude than men to gay men and lesbians, as in Bonds-Raacke *et al.* (2007).
- 85 Moreover, this confirms, as stated earlier (2006) by Larsen and László, that there are reasons for appreciation that are exclusive to the group to which the participants belong. This confirms the relation between identification with characters and appreciation. Identification has been defined by Buselle and Bilandzic (2009) as one of the main factors explaining engagement with narratives and their enjoyment, as Cohen (2006) and Igartua (2010) confirm. Identification has also been considered by Soto-Sanfiel *et al.* (2014) as a relevant factor in the reception of lesbian narratives. It is therefore recommendable for future studies to specifically observe the relation

between identification with the characters and appreciation. We should stress that we were able to obtain this result only through the application of the qualitative method, for it would have otherwise been concealed by the average magnitudes of the quantitative study. Other studies that aim to further the quest for global magnitudes for the described phenomenon and enhance the effect might include this mixed-methods approach in their observations.

- 86 Also, concurring with McKee (2000) and stemming from the qualitative study, this research found that some lesbians may express displeasure with the representation that they saw in the series. However, this study also demonstrates that regardless of whether or not the depiction of the character meets with their total satisfaction, the appreciation process remains. Therefore, appreciation seems to be independent from the perceived quality of the staging. This is another of the main contributions of this study. Other studies would do well to examine the specific relationship between the audiovisual depiction of characters and their situations and appreciation. This information suggests that reflecting on the fiction that we consume and extracting lessons from it is an activity inoculated by the learning processes and one that is even automatically unleashed.
- 87 This investigation shows that the use of a mixed-methods approach has led to greater depth in the observation of the phenomenon. The application of this design to reception issues in communication is virtually non-existent. It enabled the results of the quantitative study to be understood in their precise measure and complexity. It also enabled us to determine the strength with which the independent variables (sexual orientation, gender and story), in addition to the most influential variables on the viewing of media entertainment, can predict or influence each other. Thus, the qualitative study enabled us to weigh, adjust and calibrate the impressions yielded from the quantitative study. All of this confirms the complementariness of both methods, as González Castro *et al.* (2010) asseverate, and the appropriateness of their combined use, even though their application requires more resources and time. Nonetheless, this research demonstrates that the weaknesses of one method are the strengths of the other.
- 88 Finally, the results of this study indicate that the production of appreciation through stories that show the lives of lesbians, their conflicts and experiences, could even counteract prejudices in the perception of these sexualities. This is another of the main observations of this study.
- 89 Given the exploratory nature of this research, we consider that its conclusions must be validated not only with other narratives set in lesbian and gay communities, but through laboratory studies that allow comprehensive control of the variables involved in reception processes. Both studies in this research faced the difficult problem of obtaining the participation of an acceptable number of gay and lesbian individuals. The alternatives were to conduct the study in awareness of its methodological limitations, or cancel the study. Given the complexity of reaching possible participants, and encouraged by the idea of obtaining ecological validity in both studies, we chose to collect data from the participants' homes and via the Internet (a common practice today in audiovisual consumption). Future experimental studies must replicate this study's observations in laboratory settings.
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ABSTRACTS

We explore the effect of manifest sexual orientation and gender on the appreciation of lesbian narratives using a mixed-methods approach. Appreciation is a psychological response to narratives that prompts a profound perception of meaning or a motivation to create reflections or thoughts among audiences. We conducted a quantitative study that offered magnitudes of the effects of consumption, and a qualitative study to find explanations for them. Results from both studies were interpreted in a complementary, concurrent fashion. The investigation shows that sexual orientation affects magnitudes of appreciation while gender does not. Homosexuals appreciate these narratives more than heterosexuals. The study also revealed the key role played by personal relevance in the appreciation of these narratives. Our investigation provides further proof of the complementarity of both methods and the appropriateness of their combined use.

INDEX

Keywords: appreciation, sexual orientation, gender, narrative effects, lesbian representation, mixed methods

AUTHORS

MARIA T. SOTO-SANFIEL

Maria T. Soto-Sanfiel is an associate professor at the Audiovisual Communication and Advertising Department at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB, Spain). She is currently a researcher at the Centre d'Accessibilitat i Intel·ligència Ambiental de Catalunya (Center of Research on Accessibility and Ambient Intelligence of Catalonia), where she acts as coordinator of the design, accessibility and reception area. She is co-director, with Dr José Ignacio Latorre, of Inscience.tv, an Internet television station dedicated to the dissemination of advanced science (2009–current, see: <http://inscience.tv>). She also co-directs, with Dr Latorre, a radio station of scientific audio content via Internet, C-radio.org (UAB) (2009–current, see: <http://c-radio.org>). Her research interests are related to scientific audiovisual outreach, psychology of the media (reception studies), interactivity, narrativity, video games, voice perception, online media, genre and online journalism. Email: MariaTeresa.Soto@uab.es

ROSA MARÍA PALENCIA VILLA

Rosa María Palencia Villa is an assistant professor at the Audiovisual Communication and Advertising Department at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB, Spain). Her current main research topic is media and gender. She teaches audiovisual narrative and cinematographic language. Her research interests are related to audiovisual narrative and media gender studies. Email: RosaMaria.Palencia@uab-es

ADRIANA IBITI

Adriana Ibiti is a doctoral candidate at the Audiovisual Communication and Advertising Department at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona with a grant from CAPES Foundation (Ministry of Education, Brazil). Her research interests are related to genre, audiences, homosexuality representation, queer theory, entertainment and psychology of the media (reception studies). Email: adriana.carvalho@e-campus.uab.cat